

February 25, 2023

Dear Honored Co-Chairs, Sen. Lopes and Rep. Gresko; Vice Chairs, Sen. Hochadel and Rep. Palm; and Members of the Environment Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the packing EPR provisions of HB 6664.

My name is Katherine Breer Bruns and I am the Recycling Coordinator for the Town of West Hartford. In this capacity I have actively participated in several working groups in DEEP's Connecticut Coalition for Sustainable Materials Management, including the EPR working group. In all working groups participants have worked hard to implement measures to significantly address Connecticut's very real waste crisis. Without strong governmental legislation no meaningful change in our waste crisis will occur. I strongly support HB 6664, particularly the EPR for packaging provision, which will move Connecticut toward responsible management of packaging and printed paper through adoption of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).

I learned in a packaging related webinar that over 3000 new types of packaging material is created every year. The fastest growing material is "flexi pack," or flexible packaging. Flexi pack holds pet foods, frozen foods, dry goods, baked goods - the list goes on and on. Flexi pack is not recyclable. How in the world are municipalities, much less residents, expected to keep up with how, whether and where any of these new packaging materials can be recycled? All this excess packaging makes residents angry at municipalities, and people like me, for "making recycling SO difficult." It puts the burden of the rising cost of managing the material up to the towns. It is tax payers who are stuck with the bill to manage the cost of disposing of packaging that none of us have any control over. This has got to stop.

There are many misconceptions circulating about packaging EPR. The main one is that it will increase the cost of consumer goods, disproportionately affecting disadvantaged communities. This argument has no basis in fact. According to a Resource Recycling Systems study, there is no link between consumer prices and packaging EPR. Haulers are against it because they worry they will lose business. There is still plenty of material to haul so it is a short sighted reason to oppose the bill.

As the Town's Recycling Coordinator I spend a lot of time in schools, particularly cafeterias, instituting food scrap collection programs and improving recycling. In the cafeterias with the food scrap programs there are four signs at the waste station: the Recycling sign, with taped on examples, the Food Scrap Sign, with pictures, the Liquids sign and finally the Trash sign, overflowing with taped on examples of lunch generated trash. While there are very few items on the Recycling sign, every day the students and I tape a new material to the Trash sign. Anyone who looks at the Trash sign - a powerful visual of waste - is appalled at the amount of everyday items that cannot be recycled. I invite you to spend time in a school cafeteria and see first-hand the mind boggling variety of packaging in an average child's lunch. This plastic and packaging will be around for the duration of our young children's lives, and beyond. Is this the legacy we want to leave them? There is no reason that food and beverages, designed for children, need to be packed in containers that cannot possibly be recycled. We can do better than this.

I urge you to please support the packing EPR bill. EPR for packaging will relieve municipalities of the unjust financial burden and shift waste management costs to corporations that profit from the sale of packaged products. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this bill.



Katherine Breer Bruns

Recycling Coordinator - Town of West Hartford

Town of West Hartford